

J A C K S O N V I L L E

# LUXURY LIVING

MAY 11 2007

33  
PAGES

DEDICATED  
TO

THE  PLAYERS®

swim  
FASHION

MOTHER'S DAY  
Gift  
Ideas

INNOVATIVE  
EYE SURGERIES  
on the  
FIRST COAST

crouching **TIGER**  
MR. WOODS  
ATTACKS  
THE COMPETITION





100

MEDICAL  
INNOVATION

Dr. Gulani  
checks the  
eyes of Jaguars  
middle  
linebacker  
Mike Peterson

## Dr. Arun Gulani touches Jacksonville with life-changing eye surgeries

[ WRITTEN BY **SUSAN D. BRANDENBURG** ]

[ PHOTOGRAPHED BY **HOPE KINCHEN** ]

**Art Boutwell** lives on the second tee at St. Johns Golf & Country Club. It's a convenient spot indeed for an avid golfer to while away his retirement. However, Boutwell had just about given up on the game because of his deteriorating vision. "After hitting the ball for over 60 years, you get a feel for where it's going," he said, "but I couldn't see it anymore."

At age 90, Boutwell may go down in the history books as the oldest person ever to undergo LASIK surgery. Until he heard of Jacksonville ophthalmologist Arun Gulani, he assumed that he was inoperable due to his advanced age.

Today, Art Boutwell is back in the swing of things. With his new 20/20 vision, he's playing golf daily and happily watching the ball soar. "Dr. Gulani's advanced LASIK surgery was like night and day," he said. "I can see to read the newspaper again, but I don't waste a lot of time sitting around the house these days."

According to Gulani, "Blindness is not a sentence of aging. As long as no ongoing permanent eye disease exists, everyone deserves laser-sharp, excellent vision. I see this baby boomer generation aging gracefully and expecting better than 20/20 vision as we progress in new age technology." >



Gulani, a native of Bombay, India, is internationally recognized as a pioneer in the field of ophthalmology. At 25, the young ophthalmologist was already teaching innovative techniques to other eye surgeons, traveling to global conferences worldwide. Today, at 38, he continues to travel to Europe, South Africa, Australia, France, Switzerland, India, South America, Italy and throughout the United States teaching and often performing pro bono surgeries in remote areas. Gulani Vision Institute on Jacksonville's Southside is also the training ground for eye surgeons who vie for coveted fellowships with the doctor.

"Education is the foundation of my institute," said Gulani, who is currently exploring virtual surgical teaching systems and has recently produced a video titled "Pearls and Pitfalls." The video, which won the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Award for Best Film Production (the Society's equivalent to the Oscar) and will henceforth be included in all ASCRS training programs, details Gulani's new stitchless Corneoplastique™ surgical procedure.

The first eye surgeon in Florida to perform an artificial cornea transplant and inventor of many of the Bausch & Lomb surgical instruments used by LASIK surgeons worldwide, Gulani has now originated the revolutionary Corneoplastique™ procedure to remove corneal scar tissue. "In the past, if you had a corneal scar, you needed a transplant," said Gulani. "Now, in 3 1/2 minutes, through Corneoplastique™, you can be fine-tuned back to 20/20 vision, even if you've had previous refractive surgery, and skip the transplant."

Optometrist Cindy Couzens, who met Gulani at a continuing education lecture, attests to his expertise. "You can't help but get excited when you hear him. He's the doctor's doctor," she said. "I wasn't ready for eye surgery until I met him and I'm glad I waited. I recommend him to people daily."

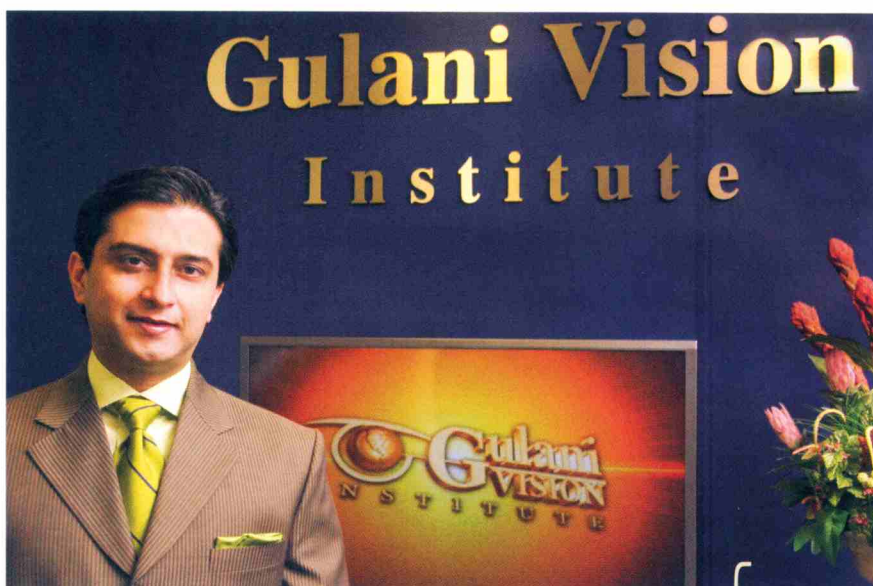
Gulani has gained a widespread reputation as the eye surgeon chosen by medical professionals who appreciate his high-tech, high-touch approach, which includes hours of personal consultation and the introduction of cutting-edge examination tools like the first Pentacam System in Northeast Florida.

"As a health-care professional myself, I was impressed with Dr. Gulani's dedication to educating me about my eyes prior to surgery and the very personal way he approached every aspect of it," said Jacksonville Psychologist Becky Olsen, who went to Gulani for PRK, advanced laser vision surgery.

Jeffrey Shearer is a Jacksonville eye doctor who sends patients with difficult vision challenges to Gulani. "Dr.

Gulani has the vision of da Vinci and a passion for perfection," said Shearer. "The unique thing about him is that he blends passion with technology to refine what's working today and make it better tomorrow."

On a follow-up visit to Gulani Vision Institute in March, Jaguars Linebacker Mike Peterson said he waited three years to have LASIK surgery. "I did my homework," said Peterson. "I knew I had to find the best doctor in the country because seeing well and playing well go hand-in-hand, especially in my position when you have to see more than one thing happening at once. I couldn't believe it — I found Dr. Gulani right here in Jacksonville!" Peterson said



that following his surgery, he could see better instantly, "but Gulani is a first-class guy who insists on in-depth follow-up." Amazed at the improvement in his vision, Peterson said, "He's the best!"

Although Gulani's practice is focused primarily on LASIK surgery, his home base in sunny Florida has led him to a great number of patients who suffer from a condition called pterygium, an unsightly pinkish-yellow, triangular-shaped tissue growth that spreads gradually toward the cornea, which limits vision. Pterygium is exacerbated by exposure to the sun, often plaguing athletes engaged in outdoor sports such as golf and tennis.

In January of 2007, Gulani performed his innovative stitchless "iceberg" surgical excision of the lesion, followed by an amniotic membrane (human placenta) graft, on pro golfer Kenny Knox. "It's a pretty common condition among golfers," said Knox, who heard about Gulani from a fellow golfer in Ponte Vedra Beach. "The other golfer had just had the pterygium surgery," said Knox. "He'd talked to eye surgeons across the country before deciding Gulani was the best." A pro golfer since 1978, Knox attests he was back on the course two days

Dr. Gulani's Vision Institute pioneers new procedures in vision correction

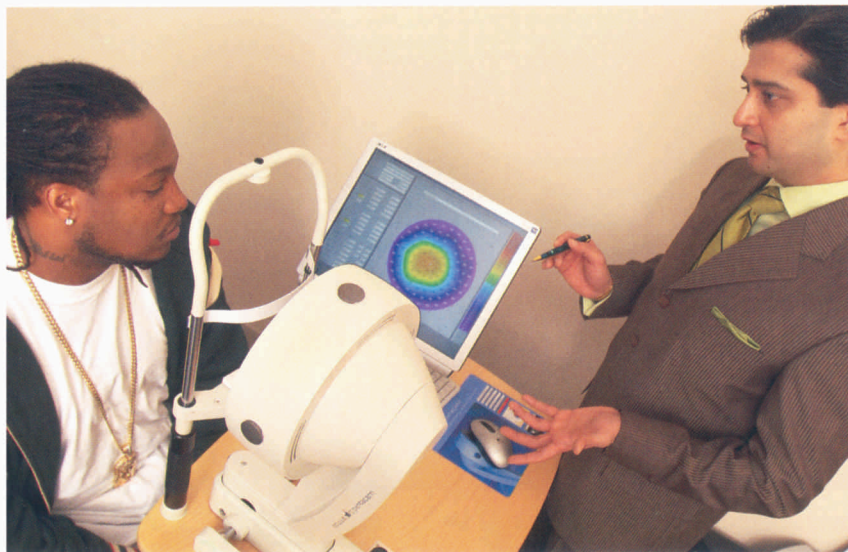


following his surgery. At the time of this interview, Knox was playing the Champions tournament in Newport Beach, California.

"The pterygium surgery was a life-changer for me," said professional surfer Greg Taylor of Cocoa Beach. A competitive surfer since he was 10 years old, Taylor developed pterygiums on both eyes at an early age but waited years for the surgery. "It took meeting Gulani for me to decide to do it," he said.

Taylor said his eyes were so red and irritated that he was constantly getting comments like, "Hey man, you must have been partying last night," although he neither smokes nor drinks. Today, at 45, Taylor is in sales in the surfing industry and regularly announces tournaments. "I was amazed," he said. "Five days after the surgery, I was announcing a tournament. I'm going to Gulani for LASIK next. He's a giant."

Fellow ophthalmologist Charles Adams calls Gulani



Jaguars middle linebacker Mike Peterson with Dr. Gulani

"a breath of fresh air," noting his dedication to his patients. "He's one of those rare doctors who is willing to take on extremely difficult cases and go the extra mile to get them a satisfactory outcome," said Adams.

Steve Kane, vice president at Bank of America in Neptune Beach, is one of those examples. Kane sought LASIK surgery for six years and, until meeting Gulani, was told repeatedly that he was not a candidate because of his condition called keratoconus (an abnormal corneal change in which the cornea gradually becomes thinned and conical, disrupting vision). When his optometrist, Frank Houser, recommended that Kane contact Gulani, he did his homework. "I googled Gulani and went on his website, [www.gulanivision.com](http://www.gulanivision.com). After several intense Q&A's with him, he decided to go ahead with it," said Kane. "I was ecstatic!"

According to Houser, "Steve also had a lot of astigmatism that concerned Gulani, but he does not proceed unless the patient is completely educated about all options." The results were more than favorable. Kane now has 20/15 vision.

Houser's high opinion of Gulani has been confirmed in the outcomes of every patient he has referred to him. "My dad was a blacksmith and an auto mechanic," said Houser. "So, mechanical things make sense to me. Gulani thinks far down the road." Houser is convinced that Gulani's monthly trans-Atlantic travels give him an edge on the latest technology. "It's amazing what you can pick up from other experts," Houser said. "There are eye surgeons in other countries doing things we haven't even dreamt of ... except Gulani, that is. He's already doing them here."

Right here in Jacksonville. Arun Gulani is a classic case of the world-renowned celebrity who is not recognized in his own backyard. Relying on his reputation rather than "professional arrangements" or media advertising, Gulani is gradually turning Jacksonville into a vision destination for the world.

"From the moment you walk into his institute and he approaches with that warm smile and graceful handshake, you know you're in the presence of a star," said Hunter Chiles of Fernandina Beach, who came to Gulani to correct LASIK surgery that he had undergone in the past. "I've never met anyone like him in my life," said Chiles. "I flew my son down here from Michigan to get LASIK. I wouldn't let anyone but Gulani touch him."

Chiles added that Gulani is a clotheshorse who wears beautifully tailored suits. In fact, he designs his clothing, attests Gulani's wife, Suparna, a family physician who specializes in women's health. "His fashion sense is an extension of his artistic ability as a man and a surgeon," she said. "Arun is also a devoted father to our two children, Aaishwariya and Yash [ages 10 and 4], but his overpowering passion is to help people see. I would not be surprised if he invents the first artificial eye."

"Jacksonville is lucky to have Gulani," said Dr. Paul Karpecki, senior clinical consultant for Bausch & Lomb. "He's a surgeon who has designed some of the best LASIK surgical instruments used today. He's a brilliant thinker." Vincent Ober, chairman of the University of Florida's Ethics Committee, attests, "Gulani is not afraid to be the first doctor on the block to try a new procedure." Ober believes Gulani is capable of extreme innovation. "For instance, someone had to be the first to use an artificial heart," he said.

Will Jacksonville someday be known around the globe as the city where the first artificial eye transplant was performed? If Gulani chooses to pursue that avenue for better vision, it is well within the realm of probability. In fact, the innovative young ophthalmologist envisions the day when a patient will walk into his institute and say, "Dr. Gulani, I have 20/20 vision," and he will reply, "I can help you."

"I believe it," said Hunter Chiles. "He corrected my vision to 20/15. Now, when I'm out on the golf course and there's a group in front of us, I can see their second shots! It's amazing. I can see a tiny ball 1.62 inches in diameter from 250 yards away!" ■